

‘Entertainment is serious business.’ Do you agree?

Shreya Sriram (17S42)

Walt Disney once proclaimed, “I would rather entertain and hope that people learned something than educate people and hope they were entertained.” He critiques entertainment, and claims that entertainment is a valuable asset to us. Entertainment manifests itself particularly in the media that surround us such as television shows, the Internet, and movies. In addition to being recreational, however, these forms of entertainment are indeed “serious business”, as they act as a platform for the education of the masses. In addition, entertainment is a field of work for many, and a source of income. Therefore, it is obvious that entertainment is important to society and is worth regarding as legitimate business. On the other hand, entertainment is often unproductive and seemingly frivolous, having no concrete positive impacts on society. It also serves as a distraction from genuinely serious business. Despite these criticisms, entertainment can still be regarded as serious business.

Entertainment acts as a platform for the education of the masses. Entertaining media forms, such as films for instance, are effective in garnering the attention of the masses, and have the capacity to attract people to fervently watch them. As a result, these modes of entertainment are often used to transmit messages to the public in the form of educational films. These are essentially films that are made to convey a key message to viewers. Films such as “The Boy In Striped Pyjamas”, for instance, have been deemed international blockbusters for their significant success in raising awareness on the catastrophic losses incurred during World War Two, as well as the need to avoid warfare in future. Musicals such as “Hairspray” have also been extremely successful, not only in entertaining their audience, but in sending across a message regarding the detriment of racial prejudices, and the need for racial equality in the 1960s. This musical-film franchise was particularly impactful during its time, with its memorable quotes being reflected in campaigns against racial prejudice. Documentaries, in particular, employ the tropes of entertainment as an incentive to entice people to watch them while ultimately glean particular insights from the documentary. Hence, entertainment is indeed significant, as it is an effective way of raising awareness on important issues.

Moreover, entertainment should be regarded as serious business as it is a competitive field of work that is highly valuable in society. The entertainment industry has risen to become one of the most profitable industries in the world, earning hundreds of billions of dollars annually. Millions of people rely on the entertainment industry for their livelihoods as well, by engaging in professions such as acting, directing, producing, scriptwriting, or even more inconspicuous roles such as set-designing. It is clear that the entertainment industry provides these groups of people with a source of employment and income, as well as a strong sense of purpose. Many such people dedicate their lives to it, be it in the early stages when they study related fields such as filmmaking, or in their later days, when they are formally involved in the profession itself. In fact, entertainment plays a necessary role in our economy as advertisements rely on entertaining the masses, in order to pique their interest and encourage them to indulge in their services or products. The competitiveness of the entertainment industry is clearly manifested in the popularity of awards shows, such as the renowned and culturally important Academy Awards, as well as the Tony Awards. These award shows are highly anticipated internationally, and have been annual events for several decades now, due to significant public support as well as the cultural impact made on society. The entertainment industry is indeed taken very seriously, due to the openly acknowledged value of entertainment in society. Hence, entertainment does qualify as important business.

However, entertainment is not always consequential. Entertainment is often seemingly frivolous and meaningless. The media is often filled with material that is purely humorous and has no actual impact on consumers beyond keeping them entertained. Slapstick humour is especially responsible for this effect. Popular television programs rely on childish, unintellectual material to entertain the masses. Though they are oftentimes successful in doing so, they leave no lasting impact on viewers. Cartoons such as the classic and well-loved "Tom and Jerry" exemplify this. In such cases, entertainment seems to lack any greater purpose beyond merely entertaining. This is also apparent in a rising medium of entertainment on the Internet, known as "memes", that aim to entertain audiences through humour. These include "Doge" as well as "Evil Kermit" memes, which are recognised online for being enjoyable to view and share, but recognised as being ultimately meaningless. Memes are regarded as uninspiring media that aim solely to entertain audiences. They reinstate the idea that entertainment is often frivolous and has no legitimate purpose beyond providing audiences with temporary pleasure. Hence, entertainment should not be regarded as important business.

Similarly, entertainment serves as a distraction from genuinely pressing concerns. Especially in our society, many find themselves excessively consuming entertaining media content and hence neglect real responsibilities. Students, for instance, are often too addicted to television shows or too immersed in video games to focus on being productive and fulfilling educational responsibilities. Entertainment on its own fails to bring out any tangible productivity that comes with other forms of serious business, and hence cannot be regarded as serious business. It breeds a culture of unproductivity in society, to the extent that it occupies time that could be spent on vital affairs, such as fulfilling responsibilities. Hence, entertainment cannot always be highly prioritised.

In conclusion, entertainment is indeed serious business. Despite entertainment being seen as frivolous in some situations and potentially distracting in others, with proper management, it plays various key roles in our society, serving to educate the masses as well as aid in societal progress, by providing people with opportunities and a sense of purpose. Entertainment is indeed serious business.

Comments:

Shreya, a very well-written and insightful essay! Well done! The points are very relevant and clearly articulated. You could link your ideas more clearly to the keywords "serious business". There is a repetition of certain phrases which limits the range of expression, although grammar is generally good. Whilst the introduction has a good hook that starts the essay off well, it would have been more credible if you had included the name of the philosopher whom you quoted. The conclusion merely summarises the points stated, and can be improved for greater impact.